

EXHIBIT A

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF IOWA

- - - - -X
IN RE: :
GRAND JURY PROCEEDINGS :
- - - - -X

Grand Jury Room, Fourth Floor
U.S. Courthouse Annex
110 East Court Avenue
Des Moines, Iowa
Tuesday, July 22, 2014
9:10 a.m.

TESTIMONY OF FERNANDO CORTEZ-LIRA

BEFORE THE GRAND JURY: HAROLD WILLIAM GOOD, Foreperson

APPEARANCES: ROBERT J. HIGDON, JR., ESQ.
Trial Attorney
Public Integrity Section
Department of Justice
310 New Bern Avenue
Suite 800
Raleigh, North Carolina 27601-1461

ALSO PRESENT: THERESA KENKEL
Grand Jury Reporter

E X H I B I T SGRAND JURY EXHIBITSFIRST REFERENCED

15 - E-mails

38

16 - Proffer Agreement

5

(Exhibits 15 and 16 were retained by Attorney Higdon)

1 Q. Let me ask you to--so that's the first four pages.
2 Let me ask you to turn to page 5 which starts "RE: Wire
3 needed." Do you see that?

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. Take a minute and look at that.

6 A. Yes.

7 MR. HIGDON: Everybody with me? Okay.

8 BY MR. HIGDON:

9 Q. Do you remember receiving this?

10 A. I do.

11 Q. What was this about?

12 A. My understanding is, from the following messages, that
13 Dimitri was asking to wire \$25,000 based on Jesse's approval.

14 Q. What you're referring to is about halfway down the
15 page that begins on Wednesday, December 28, 2011, at 8:36 p.m.

16 A. Oh, yes.

17 Q. That's the e-mail notation that the computer puts on;
18 right?

19 A. Right.

20 Q. Mr. Kesari writes, "I will need a wire for 25,000
21 first thing in the morning. Jesse has approved."

22 Who is Jesse?

23 A. Jesse is Jesse Benton, campaign chairman.

24 Q. You talked about Mr. Tate. Remind us what his role
25 was.

1 A. Mr. Tate's role was handling--he was the campaign
2 manager. He was in charge of most of the political aspects,
3 along with Jesse, and his responsibilities fell largely to the
4 operational aspects, so that I was reporting to Mr. John Tate
5 for all operational aspects.

6 Q. Now, when somebody wanted to spend money, was it
7 Mr. Benton or Mr. Tate who needed to approve it?

8 A. For most of the invoices, Mr. Tate was the one I went
9 to for approval, yes.

10 Q. Why didn't you go to Mr. Benton?

11 A. Mr. Benton is a very busy man, and we had kind of an
12 understanding that if Jesse or John approved something, and they
13 came--any field staff came to me, those requests needed to be
14 filled as quickly as possible because during a campaign, time is
15 of the essence.

16 Q. Let me make sure I understand this. If I'm a staff
17 member and I come to you and I want to spend \$10,000 and I tell
18 you that John Tate has approved it, or Jesse Benton has approved
19 it, that as far as you're concerned, it's approved?

20 A. It's approved and I put it in the chain of approval.

21 Q. What I'm getting at is a different question. What's
22 the normal process, you know, in an organization like this,
23 particularly--specifically in this organization? If somebody
24 wants to spend money, who's going to approve it? Is it Mr. Tate
25 or is it Mr. Benton?

1 A. It varied for different categories of things, but
2 either one could approve. During the normal course of my
3 interactions with invoices, the process was to have the invoice
4 come to me with all the proper information. I would prepare the
5 information for payment. But then before I would send it to
6 Texas to get paid, I would send it to John Tate to be approved.

7 Later on in the campaign, the approval process for
8 operational aspects, things like supplies for headquarters,
9 supplies for offices, all of that approval rested on me.

10 Q. Okay. So there were certain things you could approve
11 on your own--

12 A. Correct.

13 Q. --by the time the campaign matured?

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. But for something like 25,000 bucks for some unnamed
16 expense, that's not within your authority; right?

17 A. No.

18 Q. All right. So I guess what I'm asking is, is it
19 somewhat unusual to tell you that Jesse Benton has approved as
20 opposed to John Tate?

21 A. It was not unusual for Dimitri or John to send these
22 messages that Jesse had approved.

23 Q. Okay. If it had come from somebody else, it might
24 have been more concerning?

25 A. Yes.